

WANDERERS SURRENDER EARLY ADVANTAGE

Methodical Hitchin take both points

Hitchin Town 3, Wycombe Wanderers 2

AFTER ESTABLISHING a sixth minute lead Wycombe Wanderers surrendered their early initiative at Hitchin on Tuesday evening to allow the home side to recover and gather their fifth point of the new season.

Wanderers enjoyed a fair proportion of the exchanges and a truer reflection on the run of play would have been a share of the points at stake.

It was interesting to study the different styles in technique. Hitchin built their attacks slowly and methodically while Wanderers provided the complete contrast with their swift breaks.

Wycombe used their 4-2-4 formation and the first player to catch the eye was Barry Baker, who appeared to have more freedom to express himself up front than in earlier games.

WEAKNESS

Wanderers' vulnerable point was down the left flank where Charlie Gale had an unhappy night against the fast-raiding Gladwin. It is no secret that Gale does not like playing full-back — he has expressed a wish to return to wing-half — and it is significant that all three of Hitchin's goals should be made by Gale's opponent.

Hitchin's main policy of attack was the high cross-ball pumped into the Wycombe 18-yard area. Gladwin was the instigator of this tactic as he swept past Gale time and again almost with contempt. As a result Maskell had extra work to contend with and his handling deteriorated, especially in the second half.

But, Wycombe were given a

story-book start as Worley and Baker combined to pierce the Hitchin rearguard. Baker's final shot found Baigent on the line but the centre-half had no chance of clearing as he put through his own goal in the sixth minute.

However, Wycombe's lead lasted only 60 seconds as Hitchin replied with an equaliser. Gogan headed on a free-kick and while the defence hesitated Harper nipped forward to squeeze a shot through Maskell's legs.

Both teams were searching to discover the right blend in mid-field. And it certainly appeared as though Hitchin found the correct formula as they raced into a 56th minute advantage.

DEFENCE CAUGHT

Wanderers' defence was at fault as they back-pedalled allowing Harper a vast amount of room to work in. His pass reached Gladwin and Harper sprinted forward to push the return pass beyond Maskell.

It was now Wycombe's turn to try and stage a recovery and this they achieved in the 63rd minute. There seemed no apparent danger to Hitchin as Worley shaped to send over a cross. But Merrick, bursting through the middle, flashed a powerful header past Turner.

Hitchin's decider came only two minutes later as Gladwin sped past Gale and his centre found Gogan's head. Maskell pushed the header aside and in a ruck of players Harper touched the ball over the line for an untidy winner.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; I. Rundle, J. Lailey, V. Faulkner, C. Gale; B. Baker, D. Thomas; L. Worley, K. Samuels, A. Horseman, L. Merrick.